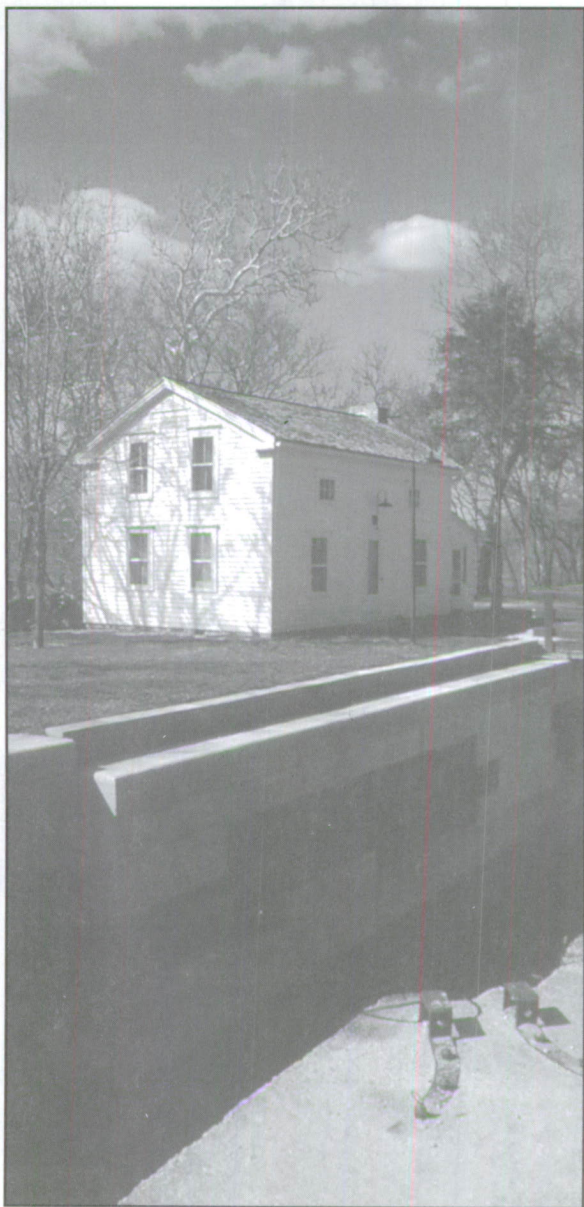


Illinois & Michigan Canal

S T A T E T R A I L



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail

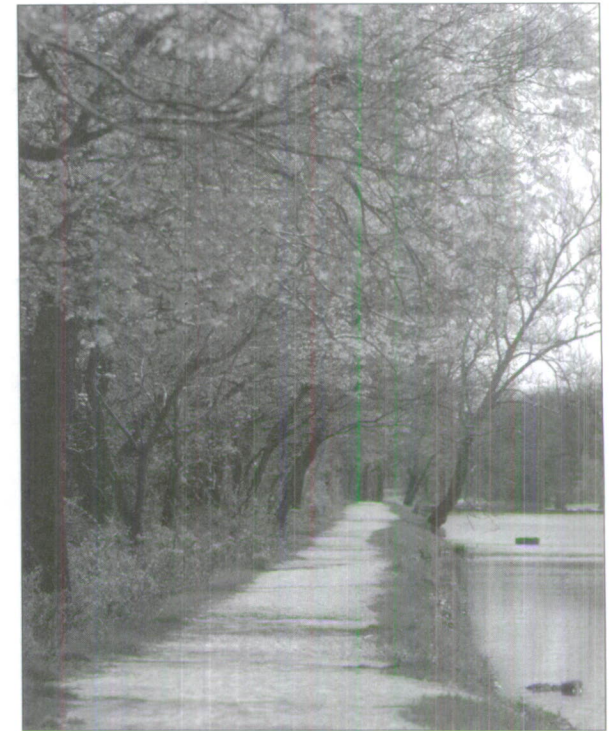
Illinois and Michigan Canal

History buffs, nature lovers and sportsmen will thrill to the sights and sounds of the 96-mile route of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Along its banks are numerous state parks, restored historical sites, an abundance of wildlife and distinctive landscapes, ranging from bluffs to rolling hills. Visitors can follow the I & M Canal State Trail beginning at Rockdale along the old towpath to LaSalle and experience 61.5 miles of scenic views of the canal and the Des Plaines and Illinois rivers. At every turn, trail users will find something of interest. One can spend an afternoon or several days exploring the wonders along this picturesque and unique area.

History

This canal provided the first complete water route from the east coast to the Gulf of Mexico by connecting Lake Michigan

to the Mississippi River by way of the Illinois River. French explorers Joliet and Marquette recognized the value of this water route for navigation in the 1600s. It was used heavily by Native Americans and traders from this time until 1823 when Illinois created a Canal Commission to oversee design and construction of the I & M Canal. The canal was not completed until 1848, at a cost of \$6.5 million. It begins at the south branch of the Chicago River at Bridgeport and extends 96 miles to the Illinois River at LaSalle. It was originally 60 feet wide and 6 feet deep. Along the canal, 15 locks were built to accommodate differences in elevation. Commercial traffic began immediately, with barges pulled by mules or horses walking on the towpaths. In 1933, the Illinois Waterway was completed and the I & M Canal was closed to navigation. Since this time the canal has been developed for recreation. Shelters and picnic areas were added and the towpath was renovated for hiking and bicycling. Interpretive programs and information centers are located at various locations along the trail.



State Parks Along Canal

Channahon State Park is located in Channahon in Will County. The park is the site of two of the I & M Canal locks and the restored locktender's house. The park provides opportunities for picnicking, tent camping, fishing and canoeing. For interpretive programs or more information about Channahon State Park, call (815) 467-4271.

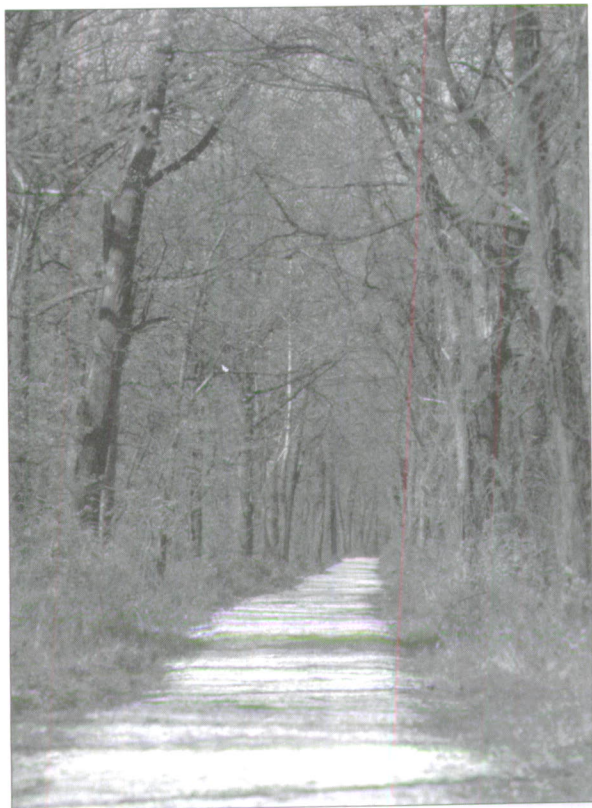
Aux Sable access area is eight miles from Channahon where an aqueduct, lock and locktender's house can be found.

William G. Stratton State Park is located in Morris and provides public boat access to the Illinois River. Fishing is popular here, as well as picnicking.

Gebhard Woods State Park is 30 acres of slightly rolling terrain dotted with many stately shade trees. It is located in Morris and is bordered on the south by the canal.

Spring brings a profusion of wildflowers, to the delight of park visitors. Songbirds, mallards, wood ducks, green herons and great blue herons can be observed as they feed or nest in the park and along the canal banks. Beaver,

muskrat, mink, raccoon and deer also call Gebhard Woods their home. The restored Nettle Creek aqueduct adds to the park's beauty. A visitor center is located in the park, where additional information may be obtained. For interpretive programs or more information about Gebhard Woods and William G. Stratton state parks, call (815)942-0796.



Buffalo Rock State Park is located five miles from the Fox River Aqueduct on the north bank of the Illinois river. Stand atop the sandstone bluff at the summit of Buffalo Rock and look upon a sweeping view of the Illinois River. Take advantage of one of several picnic areas popular for providing a shady respite from the sun, or visit a shelter with a fireplace on cool days. Visitors will feel a kinship with the Illinois Native Americans, former residents of the area, as they hike through the magnificent stands of oak, cedar and pine. Two American bison call Buffalo Rock home. For more information about Buffalo Rock State Park, call (815)433-2220 or (815)433-2224.

Trail

The trail on the old canal towpath is easy walking and gives access to unparalleled scenic and historic sights. Bicyclists can also take advantage of the groomed towpath to enjoy the natural and manmade wonders. The trail is marked and has various wayside exhibits that describe features of the canal era encountered along the way. Due to the trail's composition, horseback riding isn't allowed.

Snowmobiling

After a minimum of four inches of snowfall, snowmobilers may travel the 61.5 miles of marked trail available along the canal. Please call ahead to the nearest park office for snowfall and trail condition information.

Camping

Backpack carry-in is allowed at designated sites along the trail. Tent and youth group camping is also available at Channahon and Gebhard Woods. Open fires are permitted in campstoves and fire pits provided at the sites. Permits must be obtained from park offices prior to camping.

Picnicking

Channahon State Park provides shelters, tables and campstoves, along with playgrounds, restrooms and water

fountains. At William G. Stratton State Park, there are restrooms and drinking water located at the west end of the park along the Illinois River. Gebhard Woods provides rustic beauty with five shady picnic areas. These areas have tables, shelters, restrooms and water fountains. Join in a baseball game on the diamond while the smaller children enjoy the playground area. Buffalo Rock State Park offers several picnic areas with ample shade. A shelter house with a fireplace and restroom is available as well.

Fishing

Bring your fishing gear to the canal and try your skill at catching bass, crappie, bluegill, carp, catfish and bullhead. Pond fishing is also available at Gebhard Woods. River fishing is popular at William G. Stratton State Park on the Illinois River.

Boating

Canoeists can travel 15 miles of the canal in open water between Channahon State Park and Gebhard Woods and five miles between Utica and LaSalle. Canoe access is also available at the Aux Sable Aqueduct and at Lock 14 in LaSalle.

Boating enthusiasts have easy access to the Illinois River at William G. Stratton State Park. Any one of four boat launching ramps will provide your start to an afternoon of boating, fishing or water-skiing.

Historic and Unique Sites

The historic city of Lockport is located along the Chicago to Rockdale portion of the canal. Here visitors can tour the renovated Gaylord Building, constructed of native dolomite limestone, which served as a supply depot during the canal construction period. Today the building houses the I & M Canal Visitor Center, the Illinois State Museum's Lockport Gallery and a restaurant. A site interpreter is available at the visitor center.

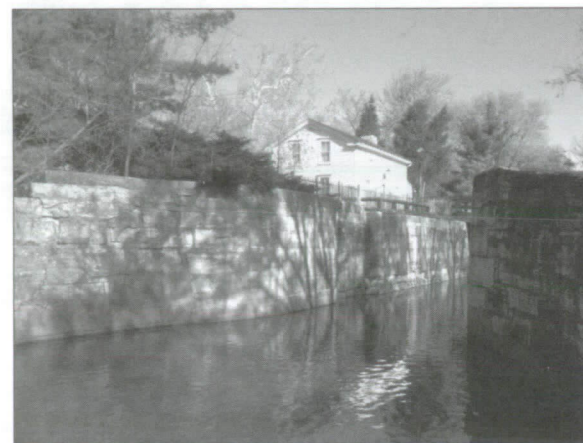
The restored Nettle Creek Aqueduct is located in Gebhard Woods State Park. In this picturesque area, visitors can relax among stone and wooden structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s.

Located in Ottawa is the Fox River Aqueduct, the largest aqueduct on the I & M Canal.

One of the largest earth sculptures ever built, the Effigy Tumuli, is located near Buffalo Rock State Park. This reclaimed mine site has turned a barren wasteland into an area filled with recreational opportunities and interesting

landscapes. It contains five large earthen figures (effigies) of native aquatic animals. Represented in geometric form are a water strider, a frog, a catfish, a turtle and a snake. You will marvel at the artwork formed with aid from heavy construction equipment.

The M.J. Hogan Grain Elevator and Visitor Center in Seneca has gone through an extensive refurbishing. This elevator, formerly known as the Seneca Grain Elevator, is open to the public. This historic structure is the only remaining grain elevator along the canal that was in operation during the canal's early days.



The M.J. Hogan Grain Elevator and Visitor Center is located at 124 W. Williams St., Seneca, IL 61360, phone (815) 357-6197. The Visitor Center will have a full time interpreter for tours April through November.

For more information, contact the Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail, Park Office, P.O. Box 272, Morris, IL 60450, phone (815) 942-0796.

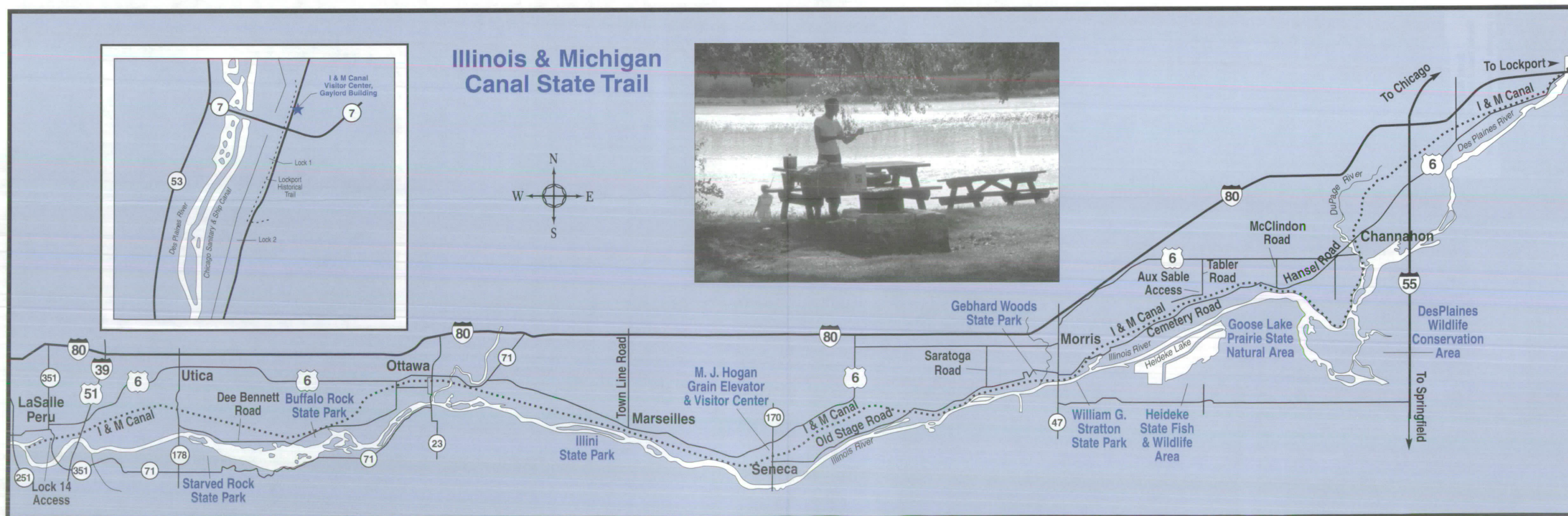
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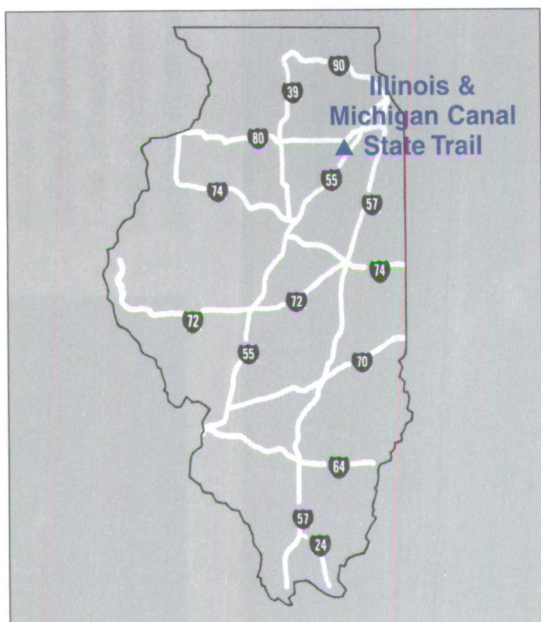


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Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail

P.O. Box 272

Morris, IL 60450, 815-942-0796

- While groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts.
- At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
- Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Public Services, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, IL 62701-1787, call (217) 782-7454 or visit its website at <http://dnr.state.il.us>.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

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